

Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago Course Profile - Spring Term 2008

T-672 Advanced Seminar in Religion and Science: “The Hard Problem – Consciousness, Experience, and Mind”

Instructors: Professors Hefner and Woloschak

Philip Hefner, Professor of Systematic Theology (Emeritus), Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, pnhefner@sbcglobal.net

Gayle E. Woloschak, Professor of Radiology, Department of Cell and Molecular Biology, Feinberg School of Medicine, Northwestern University, phone: (312) 503-4322, gwolosch@lstc.edu

course description

How does subjective experience arise from neural computation? What accounts for the transition from brain to mind? From what we read in the popular press, one might think that science is on the verge of explaining the connection between neurobiology and subjective experience—and perhaps even “explaining away” our experience, including how our biology accounts for our creative imagination, from a chef’s concocting a tasty meal to Beethoven’s composing a symphony. Religion, including belief in God, may also be considered to be reduced to neurobiological explanation.

Neuroscientists, however, following the lead of philosopher David Chalmers, call this “the hard problem.” They do not at present agree whether this problem can be solved at all or whether it is inherently beyond full explanation. Theologians like Lluís Oviedo call it “the greatest challenge now facing religion and theology from the sciences.”

The Spring 2008 Advanced Seminar in Religion and Science, co-chaired by Gayle Woloschak and Philip Hefner, will focus on this “hard problem.” A number of theologians and scientists will participate in the seminar, followed by a series of sessions designed for the involvement of advanced students.

required work

Reading (TBA), active participation, final paper

registration

The seminar is designed as a research seminar for *faculty and students*. The seminar is open to students in all degree programs. The requirements will be adjusted upwards for the most advanced students. ***Please consult with instructors prior to registration: Prof. Gayle Woloschak, gwolosch@lstc.edu or Prof. Philip Hefner, pnhefner@sbcglobal.net.***